

what a RUSH

Drivers, hikers,
picnickers, tourists
marvel at all the falls
in the Whites

By **Marty Basch**
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NORTH CONWAY, N.H. — Before I see them, I hear the roar. The thunder of the flowing water is soothing, not frightening. It's a harbinger: The snow has melted, the April rains have fallen, soon summer will be here.

The symphony heard at **Diana's Baths**, a series of small cascades here in New Hampshire's White Mountains, about a half-mile from a West Side Road trailhead, is played at waterfalls across the region. It is a performance accompanied by the wind whistling through the woods, and the chirps, warbles, and calls of songbirds.

Falls in the Whites signal nature's progression from spring to summer. They are often scenic spots to relax a while, picnic, even paint or draw. Rainbows appear, then vanish. Refreshing mist coats clothing. In no time, the chilly waters hereabouts will cool the hot feet of hikers.

No matter what you call them — waterfalls, cascades, or cataracts — the falls are as unique as the mountains around them, and they are easy-to-find destinations unto themselves.

Jackson Falls is roadside in the town of

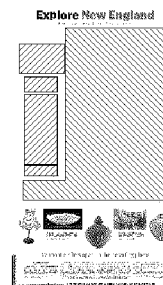
Jackson, a short drive from North Conway. My partner, Jan, first met my parents when we picnicked there some 14 years ago. A chef, she was nervous about the meeting

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and feeding my father, who had a long list of dietary restrictions. We all got along, and lunch was a hit. It's a fond memory when we stop by the falls and the massive flat rocks on the edge of the Wildcat River on Carter Notch Road (Route 16B).

Up the road, nearby Pinkham Notch is synonymous with 6,288-foot Mount Washington and its surrounding Presidential Range neighbors. The notch has a few walk-to waterfalls, the most enchanting being **Glen Ellis Falls**, a 64-foot-high horsetail shape of water plummeting to pools in a tight gorge. A dark, echoing pedestrian tunnel under Route 16 is the gateway to a downward quarter-mile walk that involves some steep steps. The falls are a magical place. If there were hobbits, surely they would dwell here.

About a 40-minute drive away, the Appalachian Trail wiggles through Crawford Notch, the place where the Saco River begins its journey to the ocean. Rock and ice climbers have hung from its



sheer walls. The notch has a couple of roadside wonders in the thin ribbons of **Silver and Flume cascades**. They are on the same side of Route 302, near the top of the pass, and visitors must cross the road to view them. Silver is the prettier of the two, with waters teeming down the cliffs on the side of Mount Jackson. When the water is rushing, the show is terrific. But they can also look like leaky faucets.

The sparkling waters of **Arethusa Falls** make it a White Mountain jewel. I have visited this place, a few miles from the two cascades, many times. Arethusa is reachable by a 1½-mile trail off Route 302 that parallels Bemis Brook along an old logging road with stone steps and bridges. This is no walk, but a hike that requires food, water, map, and first-aid kit.

Arethusa can be fat and incredible, a wide curtain of water. Rock ledges are natural vantage points for this ever-changing wall of wonder. On the hike back, a steep side trail leads to a couple of bonuses: the staircase **Coliseum Falls** and stone luge-like run of **Bemis Falls**.

On a hot summer's day, take a break along the wooden steps that lead to the narrow **Flume** in Franconia Notch State Park, about five miles north of Lincoln. The Flume, a narrow riverbed gorge, was discovered in 1808 by a 93-year-old woman who was out for a day of fishing. There's an entrance fee (adults \$10, children ages 6 to 12 \$7, 5 and under free) at the Flume Gorge and Visitors Center, where you learn how the chasm was formed.

The swirling pothole in the state park called the **Basin** is well known and not far from the visitors center. Off the multiuse path that winds through the notch, the small falls is one of the highlights on the Basin Cascades Trail. In a little over a mile, Cascade Brook tumbles over a number of ledges. Take in **Kinsman Falls** with its large boulders and the cliffs of **Rocky Glen Falls**.

The Kancamagus Highway between Lincoln and Conway in the White Mountain National Forest is a road that offers hiking trails, bicycling opportunities, picnic areas, fishing spots, and, of course, waterfalls. There are several viewing options along the 34 miles.

Just outside Lincoln a long, easy walk along the former railroad grade of the Lincoln Woods Trail leads to **Franconia Falls**. The hike is more than three miles one way along the east branch of the Pemigewasset River, but the sights are worth the effort. The falls is wide, flowing over smooth granite, and loaded with gentle pools and potholes.

The Sabbaday Falls Picnic Area is a fine spot to eat and explore **Sabbaday Falls**, midway between Lincoln and Conway. A short stroll along a wide path brings you to the falls, a trio of plunges with a smooth basin, chutes, and ledges. A few miles east, the Swift River rushes through pulsating **Rocky Gorge**, and then over **Lower Falls**, both of which are perfect spots to pull off the Kancamagus for a look.

A walk in the Whites is never cut and dried when your route includes a waterfall.

Marty Basch, a New Hampshire-based writer, can be reached at marty@martybasch.com.

If you go . . .

White Mountain Attractions

PO Box 10-CB,
North Woodstock, N.H.
visitwhitemountains.com
800-FIND-MTS (800-346-3687)
Will provide a brochure of waterfalls to visit.

Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce

Route 16, North Conway
mtwashingtonvalley.org
800-367-3364
White Mountain National Forest requires a user fee. Passes are available at ranger stations, select trailheads, and other places.

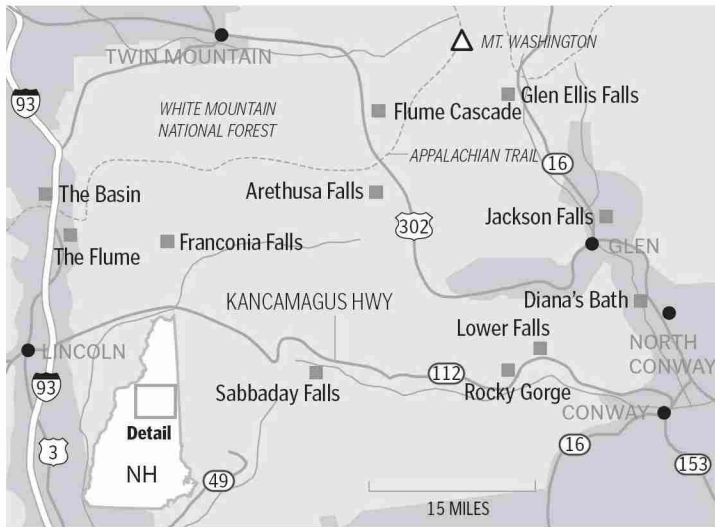
White Mountain National Forest

719 North Main St., Laconia
fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/passes/
603-528-8721
One-year pass \$20, one-year pass with two vehicles in same household \$25, one-to-seven-day pass \$5, daily pass \$3.



TAKING THE FALLS

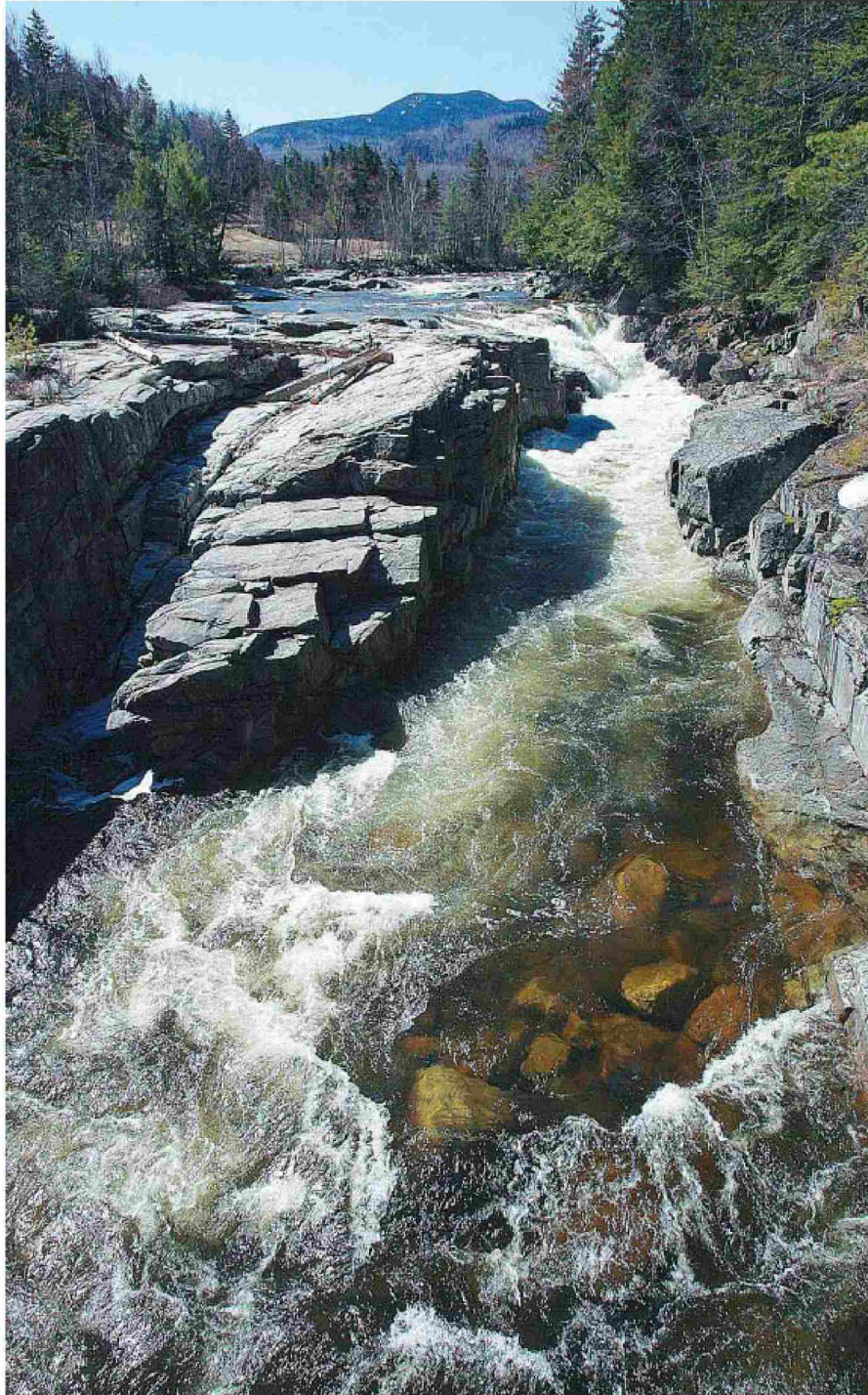
See the gushing Granite State waters at explorenewengland.com



JAMES ABUNDIS/GLOBE STAFF



Diana's Baths in Bartlett are a series of cascading falls, waterspouts, and basins in a 200-yard area of granite terraces.



Rocky Gorge, on the Swift River west of Conway, N.H., has a bridge for viewing, picnic tables, and drinking water for visitors — but no swimming.

